

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

In re Application of:	§	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.:
Ford, Timothy K.	§	2076-700USPT
	§	
Serial No.:	§	Confirmation No.:
10/699,807	§	4436
	§	
Filed: November 3, 2003	§	Examiner: Vig, Naresh
	§	
For: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR	§	Art Unit: 3629
COMPREHENSIVE REAL ESTATE	§	
TRANSACTION MANAGEMENT	§	
	§	

APPEAL BRIEF

Board of Patent Appeal and Interferences
United States Patent and Trademark Office
P. O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

This Appeal Brief is submitted in support of the Appeal of the Examiner's final rejection of Claims 1 through 80 and 88 in the above-identified application. A Notice of Appeal was filed in this case electronically on June 30, 2010 and received in the United States Patent and Trademark Office on that same date. Please charge the fee of \$270.00 due under 37 C.F.R. §1.17(c) for filing the brief, as well as any additional required fees, in accordance with the fee worksheet filed herewith.

REAL PARTIES IN INTEREST

The real party in interest in the present case is the Applicant, Timothy K. Ford (“Appellant”).

RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no other appeals or interferences known to Appellant, or the Appellant’s legal representative, which directly affect or would be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board’s decision in the pending appeal.

STATUS OF CLAIMS

The above-identified application was filed with 91 claims. Claims 81 through 87 and claims 89 through 91 were cancelled due to a restriction requirement. Accordingly, Claims 1 through 80 and 88 are pending in the application and stand rejected by the Examiner as noted in the Final Office Action dated December 30, 2009 (the “*Final Office Action*”). The rejection of Claims 1 through 80 and 88 is appealed. A current version of the pending claims is set forth in the attached Appendix A in accordance with 37 C.F.R. 41.37(c)(1)(viii).

STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

No amendments to the claims have been filed or entered subsequent to the final rejection.

SUMMARY OF THE CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The claimed invention relates to a system for comprehensive real estate transaction management. A summary of the subject matter defined in each independent claim involved in this appeal is provided below with reference to the original specification by page and line number and to the drawings by reference characters as required by 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(v). In addition, every means plus function and step plus function as permitted by 35 U.S.C. 112, sixth paragraph, is identified and the structure, material, or acts described in the specification as corresponding to each claimed function is set forth by reference to the original specification by page and line number, and to the drawings, if any, by reference characters as required by 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(v).

Claim 1

Independent Claim 1 of the present invention recites a system for comprehensive real estate transaction management (*Specification*, page 1, lines 15-18). The system comprises a real estate multiple-listing system (*Specification*, page 9, line 11 to page 10, line 14); a system for managing real estate purchases (*Specification*, page 11, line 15 to page 13, line 10); a system for managing real estate closings (*Specification*, page 15, line 6 to page 16, line 16); a system for managing post-closing activities (*Specification*, page 16, line 17 to page 17, line 18); wherein a user accesses and uses said real estate multiple-listing system, said system for managing real estate purchases, said system for managing real estate closings, and said system for managing post-closing activities, through a network (*Specification*, page 14, lines 5-8); and wherein a party collects a fee for allowing said access and shares a portion of said fee with a party related to said real estate multiple-listing system (*Specification*, page 18, line 17 to page 19, line 15).

Claim 42

Independent Claim 42 of the present invention recites a method for comprehensive real estate transaction management (*Specification*, page 1, lines 15-18). The method comprises the steps of entering information relating to a property involved in a real estate transaction into a multiple listing system (*Specification*, page 9, line 11 to page 10, line 14); monitoring the progress of said real estate transaction through a network connected to said multiple listing system (*Specification*, page 13, lines 11-20; page 14, lines 13-14; page 18, lines 6-10); managing the closing of said real estate transaction over said network (*Specification*, page 15, line 6 to page 16, line 16); managing the post-closing activities related to said real estate transaction over said network (*Specification*, page 16, line 17 to page 17, line 18); and collecting a fee and sharing a portion of said fee with a party related to said multiple-listing system (*Specification*, page 18, line 17 to page 19, line 15).

Claim 80

Independent Claim 80 of the present invention contains five means plus function elements and recites a method for comprehensive real estate transaction management (*Specification*, page 1, lines 15-18). The method comprises a means for entering information relating to a property involved in a real estate transaction into a multiple listing system (*Specification*, page 9, line 11

to page 10, line 14 and FIG. 4, reciting manual entry, selection from matching, and uploading); means for monitoring the progress of said real estate transaction through a network connected to said multiple listing system (*Specification*, page 13, lines 11-20 and FIG. 7, reciting provision of items in list format; page 14, lines 13-14 and FIG. 7, reciting logging and tracking the activity of a transaction; page 18, lines 6-16 and FIG. 10, reciting milestone signals); means for managing the closing of said real estate transaction over said network (*Specification*, page 15, line 6 to page 16, line 16 and FIG. 18, reciting the electronic ordering, provision, notification, reviewing, signing, and delivery of closing documents); means for managing the post-closing activities related to said real estate transaction over said network (*Specification*, page 16, line 17 to page 17, line 18 and FIG. 19, reciting electronically changing the listing status, providing a lender with closing documents, and allowing lenders to access the system); and means for collecting a fee and sharing a portion of said fee with a party related to said multiple listing system (*Specification*, page 18, line 17 to page 19, line 15 and FIG. 11, reciting charging participants fees and paying real estate associations or operators of multiple listing systems).

Claim 88

Independent Claim 88 of the present invention recites a method for comprehensive real estate transaction management (*Specification*, page 1, lines 15-18). The method comprises a system for managing the listing and sale of real estate wherein real estate agents have access to information relating to properties for sale within a defined geographic area (*Specification*, page 9, line 11 to page 10, line 14); providing access to said system over a network (*Specification*, page 5, lines 7-14); allowing participants in the sale of a property listed within said system to have access to said system over said network (*Specification*, page 5, lines 7-14); allowing said participants to complete the tasks required to close said sale of said property over said network (*Specification*, page 15, line 6 to page 16, line 16); and collecting a fee for use of said system and sharing a portion of said fee with one or more of said agents (*Specification*, page 18, line 17 to page 19, line 15).

GROUND OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1 through 80 and 88 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Broerman (US 6,594,633) (“*Broerman*”) in view of Raveis (US 6,321,202) (“*Raveis*”) and Liss (US Publication 2002/0095346) (“*Liss*”).

ARGUMENT

The Examiner’s decision that Appellant’s Claims 1 through 80 and 88 are unpatentable over *Broerman* in view of *Raveis* and *Liss* should be overturned on appeal for at least the following two reasons.

A. *The Examiner has not demonstrated that each claim element was independently known in the prior art.*

Courts have long held that “a patent comprised of several elements is not proved obvious merely by demonstrating that each of its elements was, independently, known in the prior art.” *KSR Int’l Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, 550 U.S. 398, 418 (2007) (citing *United States v. Adams*, 383 U.S. 39 (1966)). In order to establish obviousness, the prior art references must describe and enable the claimed invention in sufficient clarity and detail to establish that the claimed matter already existed in the prior art. *Elan Pharms. Inc. v. Mayo Found. For Med. Educ. Research*, 364 F.3d 1051, 1055 (Fed. Cir. 2003). Here, however, the *Final Office Action* fails to demonstrate that each of the several elements of independent Claims 1, 42, 80 and 88 were known in the prior art. In particular, the *Final Office Action* fails to demonstrate that (i) collecting a fee for allowing access to the systems and (ii) sharing the fee with a party related to the multiple listing system, as claimed by Applicant and in combination with the other aspects of Appellant’s invention, was known in the prior art.

(i) Access Fee

Appellant’s Claim 1 specifically recites “a party collects a fee for allowing said access.” The limitation “said access” references that “a user accesses and uses” the system. *Appendix A*, claim 1. As discussed by Appellant in its specification, the party that collects a fee may be the “owner of the system” charging “real estate service providers” for upgrading to “enhanced services within the system.” *Specification*, page 19, lines 4-8. Consequently, Appellant claims

the collection of an access fee, collected by a party such as the owner of the system, for allowing user access to the system, such as access by real estate service providers.

In contrast, *Liss* discusses only the “revenues resulting from sales, rentals or services provided.” *Liss*, para. 0026. Hence, these revenues are described as real estate agent commissions or fees. There is no suggestion or teaching in *Liss* of collecting any type of access fee for user access of its system. The examples provided by *Liss* show that the users of its system use that system for free. Specifically, *Liss* discloses potential buyers at an open-house event using a lead collection system to enter their contact information into a database. *Liss*, para. 0026. In fact, *Liss* actually teaches away from collecting an access fee because *Liss* contemplates providing incentives to users, such as contest prizes, to encourage users to access its lead collection system. *Liss*, Fig. 5. Therefore, the system disclosed by *Liss* could not teach or disclose the collection of an access fee as claimed by Appellant.

Broerman teaches a real estate computer network for facilitating a real estate transaction between a buyer and seller and their agents. *Broerman*, Abstract. *Raveis* teaches a system and method for managing real estate transactions by collecting and storing contact and transaction related data. *Raveis*, Abstract. As conceded by the Examiner, neither *Broerman* nor *Raveis* specifically suggest or teach the collection of an access fee. *Final Office Action*, Page 3.

Because neither *Liss*, *Broerman*, nor *Raveis* disclose the collection of an access fee as claimed by Appellant, *Broerman* in view of *Raveis* and *Liss* fails to teach, disclose or render obvious at least this distinguishing feature of independent Claims 1, 42, 80 and 88 and, by dependency, Claims 2-41 and 43-79. Consequently, Appellant respectfully requests that the above-referenced rejection be overturned with respect to Claims 1 through 80 and 88.

(ii) Payment for Listings rather than Leads

Appellant’s Claim 1 also specifically recites that “a party ... shares a portion of said fee with a party related to said real estate multiple-listing system.” As discussed by Appellant in its specification, “[r]evenue received by the owner of the real estate transaction management system from the real estate service providers may be shared with the real estate associations or the operator of the multiple listing system.” *Specification*, page 19, lines 10-15. Consequently, Appellant claims a party collecting an access fee, such as the owner of the system, and the sharing of a portion of the access fee with a party related to the real estate multiple listing system, such as the operator of the multiple listing system.

In contrast, *Liss* discusses only the sharing of revenue between a venue operator, such as the host of an open house, and a service supplier or promoter who supplies a means for gathering the contact information of potential buyers. *Liss*, para. 0026. In other words, *Liss* teaches the payment of a referral fee, in the context of identifying a buyer for a particular house, through the sharing an agent's commission with the supplier or promoter who helped identify the buyer from among many potential buyers. There is no suggestion or teaching in *Liss* of a party sharing a portion of an access fee with a party related to the real estate multiple listing system. In fact, since *Liss* contemplates identifying potential buyers for a particular house, the venue operator in *Liss* trying to sell that house would not likely be interested in paying for access to the listings of other houses. Therefore, the method and system disclosed by *Liss* could not teach or disclose the sharing a portion of an access fee with a party related to the real estate multiple listing system as claimed by Appellant.

Broerman teaches a real estate computer network for facilitating a real estate transaction between a buyer and seller and their agents. *Broerman*, Abstract. *Raveis* teaches a system and method for managing real estate transactions by collecting and storing contact and transaction related data. *Raveis*, Abstract. As conceded by the Examiner, neither *Broerman* nor *Raveis* specifically suggest or teach the sharing a portion of an access fee with a party related to the real estate multiple listing system. *Final Office Action*, Page 3.

Because neither *Liss*, *Broerman*, nor *Raveis* disclose the collection of an access fee as claimed by Appellant, *Broerman* in view of *Raveis* and *Liss* fails to teach, disclose or render obvious at least this distinguishing feature of independent Claims 1, 42, 80 and 88 and, by dependency, Claims 2-41 and 43-79. Consequently, Appellant respectfully requests that the above-referenced rejection be overturned with respect to Claims 1 through 80 and 88.

B. The Examiner cannot establish that the combination would have worked for its intended purpose.

Predictability as discussed in *KSR* encompasses the expectation that prior art elements are capable of being combined, as well as the expectation that the combination would have worked for its intended purpose. *DePuy Spine, Inc. v. Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Inc.*, 567 F.3d 1314 (Fed. Cir. 2009). An inference that a claimed combination would not have been obvious is especially strong where the prior art's teachings undermine the very reason being proffered as to why a person of ordinary skill would have combined the known elements. *Id.* Here, even if the

Final Office Action could establish that each of the several elements of independent Claims 1, 42, 80 and 88 were known in the prior art, the Examiner has failed to establish obviousness because the combination would not have worked for its intended purpose.

(i) Access Fee

As discussed above, Appellant claims the collection of an access fee, collected by a party such as the owner of the system, for allowing user access to the system, such as access by real estate service providers. *Liss*, on the other hand, only discusses commissions from the “revenues resulting from sales, rentals or services provided.” *Liss*, para. 0026. Moreover, *Liss* discourages and teaches away from collecting an access fee because *Liss* contemplates providing incentives to users, such as contest prizes, to encourage users to access its lead collection system. *Liss*, Fig. 5. Thus, the alleged reason to combine the prior art elements of *Liss* with *Broerman* and *Raveis* – the collection of an access fee from users – runs contrary to the prior art that teaches providing free access and contest prizes as incentives to users for accessing the system.

Because *Liss*, in combination with *Broerman* and *Raveis* teaches away from the proposed combination, a person of ordinary skill would have been deterred from combining the references as proposed and *Broerman* in view of *Raveis* and *Liss* fails to teach, disclose or render obvious at least this distinguishing feature of independent Claims 1, 42, 80 and 88 and, by dependency, Claims 2-41 and 43-79. Consequently, Appellant respectfully requests that the above-referenced rejection be overturned with respect to Claims 1 through 80 and 88.

(ii) Payment for Listings rather than Leads

As discussed above, Appellant claims a party collecting an access fee, such as the owner of the system, and the sharing of a portion of the access fee with a party related to the real estate multiple listing system, such as the operator of the multiple listing system. In contrast, *Liss* discusses only the sharing of revenue between a venue operator, such as the host of an open house, and a service supplier or promoter who supplies a means for gathering the contact information of potential buyers. *Liss*, para. 0026. In other words, *Liss* teaches the payment of a referral fee, in the context of identifying a buyer for a particular house, not sharing a payment in connection with the listings of other houses. Consequently, the alleged reason to combine the prior art elements of *Liss* with *Broerman* and *Raveis* – the sharing of an access fee with a party related to the listing of multiple houses – runs contrary to the prior art that teaches sharing of a commission when a particular house is sold to one of multiple potential buyers.

Because *Liss*, in combination with *Broerman* and *Raveis* teaches away from the proposed combination, a person of ordinary skill would have been deterred from combining the references as proposed and *Broerman* in view of *Raveis* and *Liss* fails to teach, disclose or render obvious at least this distinguishing feature of independent Claims 1, 42, 80 and 88 and, by dependency, Claims 2-41 and 43-79. Consequently, Appellant respectfully requests that the above-referenced rejection be overturned with respect to Claims 1 through 80 and 88.

C. *The Examiner has failed to prove prima facie obviousness.*

KSR International Co. v. Teleflex Inc. requires that an Examiner provide “some articulated reasoning with some rational underpinning to support the legal conclusion of obviousness.” *KSR Int’l Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, at 418 (2007). The Examiner must “identify a reason that would have prompted a person of ordinary skill in the relevant field to combine the elements in the way the claimed new invention does.” *Id.* The Examiner must make “explicit” this rationale of “the apparent reason to combine the known elements in the fashion claimed,” including a detailed explanation of “the effects of demands known to the design community or present in the marketplace” and “the background knowledge possessed by a person having ordinary skill in the art.” *Id.* Anything less than such an explicit analysis is not sufficient to support a prima facie case of obviousness.

In the present case, the Examiner has not articulated a reason with some rational underpinning sufficient to support the legal conclusion that *Broerman*, *Raveis* and *Liss* are combinable to disclose either that (i) collecting a fee for allowing user access was known in the prior art, and (ii) sharing a portion of an access fee with a party related to the real estate multiple listing system was known in the prior art. More specifically, the Examiner mentions only that sharing an “earned commission as a referral fee” from a real estate agent when the agent closes a real estate transaction is well known in the art. *Final Office Action*, Page 4. The Examiner then makes conclusory statements of obviousness without providing a detailed explanation of how these two limitations in Appellant’s Claims 1, 42, 80, and 88 are discussed, disclosed, suggested or taught in the prior art. The Examiner’s failure to include an “explicit” reason for the rejection renders the Examiner’s analysis insufficient to support a prima facie case of obviousness and, as a result, Appellant respectfully requests that the above-referenced rejection be overturned with respect to Claims 1, 42, 80, and 88 and, by dependency, Claims 2-41 and 43-79.

With the above arguments, Appellant has shown why the claimed invention is not suggested by the above combination of references and that he has pointed out the deficiencies in Examiner's rejections. All of the above rejections are therefore not well founded and should be reversed.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for the arguments of record and the reasons set forth above, all pending claims of the subject application continue to be in condition for allowance and Appellant seeks the Board's concurrence at this time. Appellant has pointed out with specificity the manifest error in the Examiner's rejections, and the claim language that renders the invention patentable over the combination of references. Appellant, therefore, respectfully requests that this case be remanded to the Examiner with instructions to issue a Notice of Allowance for all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
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ATTORNEY FOR APPELLANT

APPENDIX A

1. A system for comprehensive real estate transaction management comprising:
 - a real estate multiple-listing system;
 - a system for managing real estate purchases;
 - a system for managing real estate closings;
 - a system for managing post-closing activities;wherein a user accesses and uses said real estate multiple-listing system, said system for managing real estate purchases, said system for managing real estate closings, and said system for managing post-closing activities, through a network; and wherein a party collects a fee for allowing said access and shares a portion of said fee with a party related to said real estate multiple-listing system.
2. The system of claim 1 further including a method for granting a single access point to each of said real estate multiple listing system, said system for managing real estate purchases, said system for managing real estate closings, and said system for managing post-closing activities by a participant or a potential participant in a real estate transaction.
3. The system of claim 1 further including a method for accessing real estate-related vendor information.
4. The system of claim 1 further including a method for inputting contact information of a participant or a potential participant in a real estate transaction.
5. The system of claim 1 further including a method for electronically uploading real estate-related information.
6. The system of claim 1 further including a method for electronically delivering real estate-related information to a participant or a potential participant in a real estate transaction.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein at least a portion of said real estate-related information is selected from the group consisting of referrals, vendor contacts, listings, county property records, tax records, representation agreements, offers, offer agreements, inspection reports, lending documents and closing documents.
8. The system of claim 1 further including a method for accessing real estate-related documents through said network.
9. The system of claim 1 further including a method for restricting access to real estate-related documents through a network to certain participants or potential participants in a real estate transaction.
10. The system of claim 1 further including a method for modifying real estate-related documents through said network.
11. The system of claim 10 wherein at least one of said real estate-related documents is selected from the group consisting of listing agreements, agent representation agreements, offers, offer agreements, lending documents and closing documents.
12. The system of claim 1 further including a method for electronically or digitally signing documents through said network.
13. The system of claim 1 further including a method for automatically notifying a participant or a potential participant in a real estate transaction when real estate-related documents are modified in a manner that affects said participant or potential participant.
14. The system of claim 13 wherein said real estate-related documents are selected from the group consisting of listing agreements, agent representation agreements, offers, offer agreements, lending documents and closing documents.
15. The system of claim 1 further including a method for tracking, monitoring and logging

the progress of a real estate transaction.

16. The system of claim 1 further including a method for updating the status of the progress of a real estate transaction.
17. The system of claim 1 further including a method for granting a participant or a potential participant in a real estate transaction access to a transaction activity log.
18. The system of claim 1 further including a method for automatically notifying a participant or a potential participant in a real estate transaction when the status of the progress of said real estate transaction is updated.
19. The system of claim 1 further including a method for ordering real estate-related services through said network.
20. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for agents to communicate with potential buyers.
21. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for creating a private webpage for a buyer or a seller.
22. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for posting information to a buyer or seller's private webpage.
23. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for automatically notifying a buyer, a seller, or an agent when information is posted to a buyer or a seller's private webpage.
24. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for a seller and an agent to interact through electronic communication while viewing information posted on said seller's private webpage.

25. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for a buyer and an agent to interact through electronic communication while viewing information posted on said buyer's private webpage.
26. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for an agent to conduct a comparable market analysis of a seller's or a potential seller's real estate.
27. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for a buyer to contact referrers.
28. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for a buyer to apply for loans through said network.
29. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for searching MLS and county records for property address and county tax data.
30. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for obtaining property addresses and county tax data.
31. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for an agent to define and save search criteria from a buyer's contact information.
32. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for an agent to identify properties that match a buyer's real estate selection criteria.
33. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method for routine automated searches for property that match a buyer's real estate selection criteria.
34. The system of claim 1 wherein said real estate multiple-listing system provides a method

for the automated posting of real estate-related information to a buyer or a seller's private webpage.

35. The system of claim 1 wherein said system for managing real estate purchases provides a method for a buyer, a seller and their respective agents to access real estate-related documents through said network.
36. The system of claim 1 wherein said system for managing real estate purchases provides a method for a buyer, a seller and their respective agents to interact through electronic communication while accessing real estate-related documents through said network.
37. The system of claim 1 wherein said system for managing real estate purchases provides a method for automatically notifying a buyer, a seller, and their respective agents of electronic communication by said buyer, said seller or said agents.
38. The system of claim 1 wherein said system for managing real estate closings provides a method for acquiring electronic copies of title closing documents from a title provider through said network.
39. The system of claim 1 wherein said system for managing real estate closings provides a method for acquiring electronic copies of lender closing documents from a lender through said network.
40. The system of claim 1 wherein said system for managing post-closing activities provides a method for providing information related to closed transactions to secondary mortgage lenders through said network.
41. The system of claim 1 wherein at least a portion of the network is selected from the group consisting of the Internet, an intranet, a wireless network, a wide area network, a local area network and a point-to-point connection.

42. A method for comprehensive real estate transaction management comprising the steps of:
entering information relating to a property involved in a real estate transaction into a
multiple listing system;
monitoring the progress of said real estate transaction through a network connected to
said multiple listing system;
managing the closing of said real estate transaction over said network;
managing the post-closing activities related to said real estate transaction over said
network; and
collecting a fee and sharing a portion of said fee with a party related to said multiple-
listing system.
43. The method of claim **42** further comprising granting access to said multiple listing system
to a participant or a potential participant in said real estate transaction.
44. The method of claim **42** further comprising accessing real estate-related vendor
information through said network.
45. The method of claim **42** further comprising inputting contact information of a participant
or a potential participant in said real estate transaction.
46. The method of claim **42** further comprising electronically uploading real estate- related
information into said multiple listing system.
47. The method of claim **42** further comprising electronically delivering real estate- related
information to a participant or a potential participant in said real estate transaction.
48. The method of claim **47** wherein said real estate-related information is selected from the
group consisting of referrals, vendor contacts, listings, county property records, tax
records, representation agreements, offers, offer agreements, inspection reports, lending
documents and closing documents.

49. The method of claim **42** further comprising accessing real estate-related documents through said network.
50. The method of claim **42** further comprising restricting access to real estate-related documents through said network to certain participants or potential participants in said real estate transaction.
51. The method of claim **42** further comprising modifying real estate-related documents through said network.
52. The method of claim **50** wherein at least one of said real estate-related documents is selected from the group consisting of listing agreements, agent representation agreements, offers, offer agreements, lending documents and closing documents.
53. The method of claim **42** further comprising electronically or digitally signing documents through said network.
54. The method of claim **42** further comprising automatically notifying a participant or a potential participant in said real estate transaction when real estate-related documents are modified.
55. The method of claim **54** wherein at least one of said real estate-related documents is selected from the group consisting of listing agreements, agent representation agreements, offers, offer agreements, lending documents and closing documents.
56. The method of claim **42** further comprising tracking, monitoring and logging the progress of said real estate transaction.
57. The method of claim **42** further comprising updating the progress of said real estate transaction.

58. The method of claim **42** further comprising granting a participant or a potential participant in said real estate transaction access to a transaction activity log.
59. The method of claim **42** further comprising automatically notifying a participant or a potential participant in said real estate transaction when the progress of said real estate transaction is updated.
60. The method of claim **42** further comprising ordering real estate-related services through said network.
61. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for agents to communicate with potential buyers.
62. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for creating a private webpage for a buyer or a seller.
63. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for posting information to a buyer or seller's private webpage.
64. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for automatically notifying a buyer, a seller, or an agent when information is posted to a buyer or a seller's private webpage.
65. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for a seller and an agent to interact through electronic communication while viewing information posted on said seller's private webpage.
66. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for a buyer and an agent to interact through electronic communication while viewing information posted on said buyer's private webpage.

67. The method of claim **41** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for an agent to conduct a comparable market analysis of a seller's or a potential seller's real estate.
68. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listings provides a method for a buyer to contact lenders.
69. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for a buyer to apply for loans on-line through said network.
70. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for searching MLS and county records for property address and county tax data.
71. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for obtaining property addresses and county tax data.
72. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for an agent to define and save search criteria from a buyer's contact information.
73. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for an agent to identify properties that match a buyer's real estate selection criteria.
74. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for routine automated searches for property that match a buyer's real estate selection criteria.
75. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple-listing system provides a method for the automated posting of real estate-related information to a buyer or a seller's private webpage.
76. The method of claim **42** wherein said multiple listing service provides a method for a buyer, a seller and their respective agents to access real estate-related documents through

said network.

77. The method of claim 42 wherein said multiple listing system provides a method for acquiring electronic copies of title closing documents from a title provider through said network.
78. The method of claim 42 wherein said multiple listing system provides a method for acquiring electronic copies of lender closing documents from a lender through said network.
79. The method of claim 42 wherein said multiple listing system provides a method for providing information related to closed transactions to secondary mortgage lenders through said network.
80. A method for comprehensive real estate transaction management comprising:
means for entering information relating to a property involved in a real estate transaction into a multiple listing system;
means for monitoring the progress of said real estate transaction through a network connected to said multiple listing system;
means for managing the closing of said real estate transaction over said network;
means for managing the post-closing activities related to said real estate transaction over said network; and
means for collecting a fee and sharing a portion of said fee with a party related to said multiple listing system.
88. A method for comprehensive real estate transaction management comprising:
a system for managing the listing and sale of real estate wherein real estate agents have access to information relating to properties for sale within a defined geographic area;
providing access to said system over a network;
allowing participants in the sale of a property listed within said system to have access to

said system over said network;
allowing said participants to complete the tasks required to close said sale of said
property over said network; and
collecting a fee for use of said system and sharing a portion of said fee with one or more
of said agents.

EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None